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Written statement* submitted by the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[17 February 2014]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Strengthening the Role of Victims of Terrorism in Countering Terrorism&*

Terrorism is an organized threat; a sever type of extremism and global radicalism. Terrorism has left many people dead and wounded in every country of the world. The threat of terrorist attacks is permanent, global and widespread.

Terrorism also imposes destructive impacts on the societies. By instilling horror and fright, terrorist groups deprive the societies from their primary rights, peace and security. Terrorism severely endangers the human rights, threats democracy and challenges the first demands of the people for enjoying a life free from any sense of fear. Therefore, we are facing a dire threat which applies modern tools in the worst form.

Our world still suffers casualties. The numbers of victims are increasing. Tens of thousands of civilians are killed in terrorist attacks specifically in Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, Nigeria, Thailand, Russia, Philippines, Lebanon, Syria, India, Iran, France, Norway, Sweden and the United States of America. Just during the recent months of 2013, terrorist attacks have sharply risen in Iraq and thousands of civilians are targeted in terrorist operations, causing a climate of intimidation and dread.

The policies adopted for fighting against terrorism appear to be ineffective instruments. These debilitations aggravate a feeling of frustration.

Many national laws and international resolutions have been ratified on the condemnation of terrorism and a lot of international institutions are established for the implementation of these regulations. But considering the deplorable events we are witnessing, it seems that there is a long way to the real implementation of such instruments.

Terrorist attacks have spread their impacts on the societies and on the life of the victims. Therefore, the commitments of international organizations, the collaboration of states and finally the contribution of the civil societies would be necessary for fighting against terrorist organizations and controlling the impacts of terror.

For protecting the primary rights of the people in the face of this borderless and lawless war and safeguarding the heritage of human civilization, a new solution must be worked out.

Terrorism victims, more than anyone else, are familiar with the concept of fear and horror and the impacts of terror on the society. Despite sustaining the gravest damages, they have taken appreciable steps for fighting against terrorism and realization of the aspiration of a 'world without terrorism'. Some of these steps would be:

Redefining an active role for victims of terrorism in counterterrorism measures; Up to now, significant conferences are held on the issues of protecting and observing the rights of the victims; however, there has never been the fair position for the victims to take their role as the main stakeholders. One of such conferences is The Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) which has held three sessions in the United States of America, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. But terrorism victims don't want to keep silent and merely attract international support for assisting victims of terrorism- the utmost measure, so far, carried out for victims in such conferences. The reality is that the concern of the victims is something beyond just being ignored. Victims of terrorism want to assume an active role as a part of civil society in suppressing terrorism.

International coordination: In this regard, Association for Defending Victims of Terrorism calls for the consideration of this issue and consolidation of the connections between associations and ngos of victims with special working groups and entities of the United Nations including *Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), Working Group on Supporting and Highlighting Victims of Terrorism, Counterterrorism Committee (CTC)* and the *Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED).* Such an interaction can resolve the problem of lack of coordination in the activities focused on fighting against terrorism at national and international levels and develop a prevailing consensus between all involved parties.

Promoting human rights within countries: in the light of acknowledging and stressing on the role of nongovernmental organizations, not only the promotion of human rights and decreasing violence would be feasible but also adoption of military approach and resort to hard power would also be minimized to a considerable extent.

Mr. Ben Emmerson, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, in his report of August 18, 2011, emphasized on the necessity of considering and recognizing the pain and suffering of the victims of terrorist acts in adoption of a permanent comprehensive strategy for fighting against terrorism. As the UN Special Rapporteur, he has pledged to promote the rights of the victims of terrorism and stressed on the responsibilities of the states before victims.

In line with international resolutions, Association for Defending Victims of Terrorism asserts that terrorism is strongly condemned in any form, in any way, committed by anyone and it is a serious threat against the peace and security of the world.

Emphasizing on the point that no reason could justify the use of terrorist acts, it should be acknowledged that various elements are determining in the eruption of acts of terrorism; denying the right to life and security are among the most important causes. On this basis, our Association has focused its activities on elucidating this aspect of the issue along with highlighting the voices of the survivors and families of the victims via giving them the opportunity to present themselves in the media and holding workshops for them. ADVT also makes its best efforts to open a new window for showing the impacts of terrorism and its everlasting consequences like fear, anxiety and stress, on the families. The voice of these victims can also be helpful for foiling the recruiting activities of terrorist groups and public mobilization for fighting against terrorism.

Reinforcing a global network of victims of terrorism; One of the obstacles before civil society's effective interaction in counterterrorism measures is the lack of coordination among counterterrorism strategies at local, national and international levels. Accordingly, Association for Defending Victim of Terrorism calls for the establishment of a global network of victims of terrorism in order to achieve an international consensus on the manifest human rights principle of the right to life.

The necessity of adopting a collaborative approach: in the resolution 13/26, the Human Rights Council "deeply deplored suffering caused by terrorism to the victims and their families and expresses its profound solidarity with them, and stressed the importance of providing them with proper assistance". Accordingly, Association for Defending Victims of Terrorism also calls for the recognition of the outstanding role of the survivors and victims of terrorism in countering terrorism. Supporting networks of victims, who are not looking for revenge but rather, in the face of violent radical ideologies, speak bravely about a world free from terrorism; recognition of the significant role of the NGOs in protecting victims and collaboration in the global strategy for fighting against terrorist acts are among other demands of ADVT.

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* The Institute for Scientific and Political Research without consultative status, also shares the views expressed in this statement.